

Emily Martinez  
Government System  
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Beat

Dr. Bruce Murphy, the president of Nicholls State University, recently changed the internal government system and established the University Council, a group that meets weekly and addresses issues that affect the entire university.

The University Council is comprised of the senior leadership of the university, including vice presidents, deans, chair of the faculty senate, members of the president's senior staff as well as representatives from student and staff organizations. The University Council is charged with framing policy and procedures, making recommendations to the president and with ensuring that decisions reached are effectively implemented. The University Council is also charged with aligning the University's strategic plans and available resources to ensure that the University fulfills its mission. The University Council was expanded from the President's Cabinet, which was from the previous system of government. Dr. Murphy said "most of the decisions were made by a small group of people, so I flip-flopped that." To do most of the decision making, information sharing, implementation and strategic planning, Dr. Murphy expanded an existing group of people to form the University Council so every area of the university has a voice.

Dr. Murphy's idea for the University Council is that everyone will know what's going on. Dr. Murphy said that he hopes the University Council will create a sense of team work, rather than an individual effort. The feedback that Dr. Murphy was getting was that some people were

feeling like there were decisions being made that they didn't have any input or knowledge of ahead of time, yet the decisions that were made affected them.

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Dr. Murphy said "That's not good, I mean it can be done but unless you're in an emergency than it is probably not the best way to go about it." Dr. Murphy said his goal in establishing the University Council is to have more participation in the decision making process from every department of the university.

The University Council will consist of 28-30 people. Every area of the university will have one representative. The faculty senate, the student government association and the classified/unclassified employees are allowed to bring more officers in addition to the appointed representative. However, Dr. Murphy said that it will not benefit anyone to bring additional officers so they have more votes. The University Council is not a voting group. Dr. Murphy said the University Council "is for making recommendations to me." The University Council is to provide information to the representatives. It is the representatives' responsibility to relay that information to the people they represent.

Administrative assistant, Phyllis Daigle, will send an email with an agenda to all parties involved and request additional agenda items. Each item that is added will be checked by Dr. Murphy and included in the agenda if approved. By doing that Dr. Murphy hopes to involve the entire community in discussion of issues that affect people throughout the campus. Dr. Murphy said the University Council will also look at calendars and events to make sure that nothing

conflicts. Dr. Murphy's Executive Assistant, Audrey Dozar, said she likes the fact that the University Council will meet once a week. Dozar said "because they are meeting weekly, they will be able to have input on things like budget decisions and be better informed about the calendar of events for each area." Dozar also said that "it's a way to ensure the university is on track with the mission statement."

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Dozar said that the University Council will be beneficial to both the council of people and the president himself. Dr. Murphy will have a lot more input from those groups so that he can make better informed decisions. On the same token, Dr. Murphy will provide them with information as he gets it from the system office.

The University Council was created to involve everyone in the decision making process. Dr. Murphy said "if you complain about the way things are going, tough luck because now you're a part of the decision." Dr. Murphy said his main goal for the University Council is consensus. What consensus means according to Dr. Murphy is that everyone "understands the issue/problem, understands how the solution was achieved and accepts it as the groups' answer." Dr. Murphy said he knows everybody will not love every decision that's made. He said that would be great, but if everyone at least understands the issue and accepts the groups' solution, then they can go back and represent it to their groups. Dr. Murphy said "they will have ownership of the decision." He said he believes this will help the representatives "buy in to it." Dr. Murphy said they will be better equipped to implement the decision. He said "the things that

are to be implemented must be accepted and understood by the people who will re-present them.”

The former Executive Council is now called the President’s Cabinet which consists of the Vice Presidents, Athletic Director, Assistant Vice President for Facilities, and the Chief Financial Officer. There are two other people that are invited but are not required to attend meetings, NCAA compliance and the Internal Auditor. This group of people is who Dr. Murphy would call in to make sure “we make informed decisions.” This group acts as Dr. Murphy’s “really quick go-to experts and crisis management team.”

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Dr. Murphy said that the President’s Cabinet represents the entire campus and are the people that report directly to him. This group can make quick, informed decisions because of their position in the leadership of the university.

